30 Kaiser Wilhelm Society: Record of a Conference Regarding the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Physics [June 22, 1934]


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[1] Max → Planck was president of the → KWG from 1930 to 1937. Cf. also doc. 38.

[2] Max Donnevert (1872–?) studied law at the Universities of Freiburg, Berlin and Strasbourg and was a lawyer at the regional superior court (Landgericht) 1901–18. He obtained his habilitation at the University of Frankfort-on-Main and was a member of the second district of the Alsace-Lorraine diet (Landtag) until 1918, and captain of the Bavarian Militia Cavalry. He was adviser to the → RIM from 1920 and was officially responsible for affairs of science and the arts. Donnevert was president of an organization promoting the Alsace and Lorraine regions within the Reich and vice-president of the Science Institute for the same regions in Frankfort.

[3] Karl Freiherr von Zoege-Katzdangen Manteuffel (1872–?) (also Zoege or Szöge) was a retired district marshal (since 1904) and lieutenant of the 1st Dragoon Guard of the Reserves. He owned the entailed estate at Katzendangen. Von Manteuffel studied at the Universities of Bonn and Halle and took his doctorate in economics. In 1906 he was a founding member and the first director of a club of Germans in the electorate in the Urals, Verein der Deutschen im Kurland. He volunteered into the German Army in 1918 and fought in the Baltics against
By way of introduction Privy Councillor Planck pointed to the great and as yet incalculable scientific importance of atomic research, which the new institute intends to focus on especially.\footnote{Plans for the establishment of an institute for pure physical research outside the university system had existed since Philipp → Lenard’s petition in 1906, but had not yet been materialized. The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Physical Research was founded in 1917 with A. → Einstein as its director; but up till then it had only been an instrument for distributing funds and instrumentation to research groups at universities, since the World War impeded the construction of its physical premises. In 1929 the KWG rejected Max von Laue’s application to create an institute of theoretical physics. Cf. Vierhaus & vom Brocke (Eds.) [1990], pp. 77, 177ff.} He reported that Prof. Debye at Leipzig, who is the leading man in the field in question, has been successfully enlisted as director of the institute.\footnote{Erich Lebus’s title Ministerialrat is changed in hand to Ministerialamtsrat. Lebus is registered in the Berlin Addressbücher of 1929 and 1941 as senior clerk in the civil service (Minist.-Amtm) and chief executive officer (Amtsrat).} He said, the Prussian Cultural Ministry also attaches the greatest importance to the institute being built for Professor Debye, since it intends to call him to the University of Berlin as successor to Privy Councillor Nernst.\footnote{Peter → Debye became the director of the KWIP in 1935, after the decision for its construction had been made; see docs. 54, 80f.} He hoped that the Rockefeller Foundation, which had already approved 1.5 million reichsmarks some years ago for the construction of the institute, would keep to its promise, even though he could not conceal certain misgivings regarding the current unfavorable sentiment in the U.S.A. towards Germany.\footnote{In 1933 Walther → Nernst retired from his duties as professor of physical chemistry at Berlin University at the age of 69.} The remaining question now is to find out whether the additional financial conditions are met, so that he can submit a new application to the Rockefeller Foundation.

The undersigned reported on the basics of the proposed financing: According to Prof. Debye an annual budget of 150,000.– reichsmarks is considered necessary. There is available for the construction:

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the Bolsheviks. He earned the Iron Cross, was a member of the Knights of Malta and was a Knight of Honor of the Association of Baltic Veterans. He was first chairman of the Union of Former German Colonists in Russia and a member of the Nation Club. In 1935 von Manteuffel was a political writer in Berlin, ministerial director and head of Amt I: Reich Budget at the Reich Ministry of Finance (after 1934). See, e.g., Karl Freiherr von Manteuffel: Meine Siedlungsarbeit im Kurland, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1941; and his dissertation, Das Sparen. Sein Wesen und seine volkswirtschaftliche Wirkung, Halle: Lippert/Naumburg, 1900 (Vol. 26 of Sammlung national-ökonomischer und statistischer Abhandlungen des Staatswissenschaftlichen Seminars zu Halle a. S., Jena: G. Fischer, 1900).

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7In 1933 Walther → Nernst retired from his duties as professor of physical chemistry at Berlin University at the age of 69.

8Indeed, the Rockefeller Foundation had already committed itself in April 1930 with contributions of 635,000 reichsmarks for the plot of land and 1.5 million reichsmarks for the building. On the Rockefeller Foundation’s science policy and the difficult decision by its board on whether to fulfill this promise even though the → NSDAP now governed Germany, see Macrakis [1986]; and cf. Düwell in Vierhaus & vom Brocke (Eds.) [1990], pp. 752ff.; on the foundation see Fosdick [1989].